

bacterium breve. Preferably the composition used in the process of the invention may further comprise one or more other *Streptococcus thermophilus* strains or one or more other *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* strains. These strains may be added because they may have other properties that are advantageous in for instance a process for the production of a fermented milk product such as yogurt or in the final properties of the fermented milk product such as yogurt. These strains may for instance further improve the acidification speed or they may confer certain flavours such as in the case of adjunct cultures.

[0061] *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* strain is a classical yogurt strain and may be present in the composition to be used in the process of the invention. The inventors have found, however, that the *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* strain did not contribute to (the improvements of) any of the texture attributes. Yogurts made with a composition that is lacking a *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* gave the same values of the texture attributes compared to the same composition comprising a *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *Bulgaricus*, such as strain E.

[0062] *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus*, when present in the compositions of the invention, preferably strain E (*Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* DS71836) may constitute between 0.1% and 10% of the total cfu's of the composition, preferably between 0.2% and 5%, more preferably between 0.5% and 2%, more preferably between 0.8 and 1.2%, most preferably 1%. Strain E in the compositions used in the process of the invention (*Lactobacillus delbrueckii* ssp. *bulgaricus* DS71836) comprising 2 or more strains of which at least one strain is strain E, constitutes between 0.1% and 10% of the total cfu's of the composition, preferably between 0.2% and 5%, more preferably between 0.5% and 2%, more preferably between 0.8 and 1.2%, most preferably 1%. Preferably, the *Streptococcus thermophilus* strains A, B, C and D constitute the remaining cfu's of the composition of the invention.

[0063] In the compositions comprising one *Streptococcus thermophilus* strain (A or B or C or D) and strain E, strain E may be present as described above, i.e. between 0.1% and 10% of the total cfu's of the composition, preferably between 0.2% and 5%, more preferably between 0.5% and 2%, more preferably between 0.8 and 1.2%, most preferably 1%. In those compositions, the *Streptococcus thermophilus* strain constitutes the remaining cfu's whereby the total cfu's is 100%.

[0064] The strains in the compositions comprising two or three or four of the *Streptococcus thermophilus* strains A, B, C and D may constitute the individual *Streptococcus thermophilus* strains in any suitable percentage of the total *Streptococcus thermophilus* cfu's in the composition. In the compositions comprising two or more of the *Streptococcus thermophilus* strains and strain E, strain E is present as described above, i.e. between 0.1% and 10% of the total cfu's of the composition, preferably between 0.2% and 5%, more preferably between 0.5% and 2%, more preferably between 0.8 and 1.2%, most preferably 1%. In those compositions, the *Streptococcus thermophilus* strains constitute the remaining cfu's whereby the total cfu's is 100%.

[0065] The most preferred fermented milk product that is produced by the process of the second aspect of the invention is yogurt as defined hereinbefore. The milk that may be used in the process of the third aspect of the invention, may be any milk suitable for the production of a fermented milk

product, such as yogurt. Milk has been defined hereinbefore and may encompass milks from mammals and plant sources or mixtures thereof. Preferably, the milk is from a mammal source. Mammal sources of milk include, but are not limited to cow, sheep, goat, buffalo, camel, llama, mare and deer. In an embodiment, the milk is from a mammal selected from the group consisting of cow, sheep, goat, buffalo, camel, llama, mare and deer, and combinations thereof. Plant sources of milk include, but are not limited to, milk extracted from soy bean, pea, peanut, barley, rice, oat, quinoa, almond, cashew, coconut, hazelnut, hemp, sesame seed and sunflower seed. In addition, the term "milk" refers to not only whole milk, but also skim milk or any liquid component derived thereof. The fat content in the milk and in the subsequent fermented milk product, such as yogurt, may be as is known in the prior and as is referred in the background of the invention.

[0066] In one preferred embodiment, the invention provides a process for the production of a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, wherein the gel strength is improved. In another preferred embodiment, the invention provides a process for the production of a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, wherein the serum viscosity is improved. Most preferred is an embodiment, wherein the invention provides a process for the production of a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, wherein both the gel strength and the serum viscosity is improved.

[0067] In a further preferred embodiment, the invention provides a process for the production of a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, wherein the protein level is reduced. More preferably the invention provides a process for the production of a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, wherein the protein level is reduced while the the gel strength and/or the serum viscosity is maintained. More preferably the present invention provides a process for the production of a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, wherein the protein level is less than 12%, less than 11%, less than 10%, less than 9.5%, less than 9.0%, less than 8.5%, less than 8.0%, less than 7.5%, less than 7.0%, less than 6.5%, less than 6.0%, less than 5.5%, less than 5.0%, less than 4.9%, less than 4.8%, less than 4.7%, less than 4.6%, less than 4.5%, less than 4.4%, less than 4.3%, less than 4.2%, less than 4.1%, less than 4.0%, less than 3.9%, less than 3.8%, less than 3.7%, less than 3.6%, less than 3.5%, less than 3.4%, less than 3.3%, less than 3.2%, less than 3.1% or less than 3.0% of the fermented milk product, preferably yogurt.

[0068] In a second aspect, the invention provides a fermented milk product, preferably yogurt, obtainable by the process of the first aspect of the invention and comprising one of the compositions as defined hereinbefore, preferably composition 1 or composition 2 or composition 3 or composition 4 or composition 5 or composition 6 or composition 7 or composition 8 or composition 9 or composition 10 or composition 11 or composition 12 or composition 13 or composition 14 or composition 15 or composition 16 or composition 17 or composition 18 or composition 19 or composition 20 or composition 21 or composition 22 or composition 23 or composition 24 or composition 25 or composition 26 or composition 27 or composition 28 or composition 29 or composition 30 or composition 31 or composition 32 or composition 33 or composition 34 or composition 35 or composition 36 or composition 37 characterized in that the fermented milk product, preferably